United Nations DP 2005/19

Executive Board of the
United Nations Development
Programme and of the
United Nations Population Fund

Distr.: General
22 April 2005

Original: English

Annual session 2005
13-24 June 2005, New York
Item 5 of the provisional agenda
Human Development Report

Update on Human Development Report consultations

1. In January 2003 during its 57th session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 264 (A/RES/57/264), in which it invited the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA to include in its annual work plan as from 2003 a separate agenda item on the Human Development Report (HDR). The aim of the resolution is to improve the consultation process with Member States regarding the Human Development Report in order to enhance its quality and accuracy without compromising its editorial independence.

2. In line with this resolution, the actions undertaken to improve the quality of consultations with Member States and with the community of human development practitioners at large are summarized below. This narrative details a thematic consultation that took place to select the theme of the HDR 2005, the informal Executive Board consultations carried on throughout the process of elaboration of the HDR 2005, and some specific efforts pertaining statistics included to enhance the transparency and accessibility of the work of Human Development Report Office (HDRO).

3. Last year HDRO held a special network consultation to select the theme for the HDR 2005. The discussion, launched by the Director of HDRO, was hosted for a period of one month on the UNDP Resident Representatives network (RR net) and Human Development Report network (HDR net). The HDR net is free and open to all human development practitioners who wish to join. It currently encompasses a large number of such practitioners around the world. A vibrant discussion took place, with very interesting contributions. HDRO drew on this resourceful community to help identify pertinent key issues in *Reshaping international cooperation: aid, trade and security in an unequal world*, the theme of this year's HDR.

4. During the process of elaboration of the HDR 2005, HDRO held five informal consultations with the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. The focus of the first informal consultation, which took place on 27 October 2004, was the presentation and discussion of the concept note for the HDR 2005. The focus of the second informal consultation, which took place on December 9 2004, was to present and

05-32078 (E) 020505

discuss the outline of the HDR. The third informal consultation, which took place on 14 February 2005, focused on challenges and strategies to improve the statistical work of the HDR. The fourth informal consultation will take place on April 21 2005. It will focus on the final detailed chapter structure, which underwent revision after consultations within HDRO and with the HDR expert advisory panel. A final informal consultation will be held once the drafting of the document is complete, to discuss the message of the HDR.

5. Each of the informal consultations has been well attended by Executive Board members and interested observers. Several delegates found the consultation process very useful, while expressing strong support to the editorial independence of the HDR. HDRO also benefited from the constructive comments made by delegates. Their comments and suggestions have been taken into consideration in preparing the HDR 2005.

6. The publication of the HDR is an important contribution to generating a demand for better data to influence policy debates. Given the significance of the statistical work of HDRO and the challenge of ensuring that the rigorous statistical work in the HDR meets the highest professional standards, every year one informal thematic consultation has been devoted to discussing statistical issues. In 2003, the HDRO statistics team developed a strategy for dealing with data gaps, inconsistencies and data quality problems. The strategy was presented during the informal consultation process with the Executive Board early in 2004. The strategy paper prepared by the team was well received and supported by the Executive Board, the Executive Team and the HDRO statistical advisory panel.

7. As part of the process of implementing the strategy paper HDRO initiated a more direct contact with national statistical offices and other government agencies. HDRO staff have undertaken missions in response to government requests, and have made every effort to provide direct responses to Governments on data concerns. HDRO staff have been involved in providing training to UNDP country offices and national experts. Last year, a new statistical website was set up to make information more accessible and transparent, and improved launch materials have been prepared, including clarifications on changes on the Human Development Index and country fact sheets. In order to reduce inconsistencies between national and international data, HDRO has been working closely with the international data agencies participating in international and regional statistical meetings, such as the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

8. HDRO is committed to preparing the HDR in a neutral and transparent manner and in full and effective consultation with Member States, with due regard to the impartial nature of the HDR and the appropriate use of resources.